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homemakers' chat
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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Friday, March 13, 1942

Subject: "Work Clothes For Women," Information from home economists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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They say this is a "smart man's war." That goes for smart women too. For women are helping out in this war in almost as many ways as the men. Some of them are working harder and longer at their regular jobs. Some of them are holding down the sort of jobs they've never had before--doing what we'd call "man's work," in peacetime.

Today I have some special news for women war workers--some notes on the latest in smart, sensible, and becoming work clothes. This news is from the U. S. Department of Agriculture's clothing specialists. They believe smart women can do their best war work if they are dressed sensibly and suitably for their jobs. And they believe women can do many kinds of men's work in becoming feminine garments.

Now, by feminine garments they don't mean frilly, ruffly dresses. Far from that. Rather, they mean--garments designed for a woman's figure-- garments that are built to suit the type of work a woman is doing.

The Department of Agriculture released the designs for work clothing last summer. The first garments the specialists worked out were for farm women. Since that time, they have designed outfits for women who work in factories, in laboratories, in institutional kitchens, in their own homes, and even one outfit for nurses.

And just in case you're wondering where to find these new designs, let me explain briefly how the new work clothes get a national distribution.

As soon as the specialists perfect a design they "release" it--that is, call it to the attention of commercial pattern manufacturers and manufacturers of women's ready-to-wear garments. These commercial organizations can then take the design and work

out their own patterns and readymades--in all the regular sizes they carry.

To date, 16 designs have been released. Practically all of these 16 are now in the pattern books, the mail order catalogues, or in readymade garments in various stores. Some of them you may already have seen--or may even be wearing.

Today, perhaps you'd like to hear about two of the latest designs which haven't been widely distributed as yet.

One of these two new designs is called a PROTECT-ALL -- a garment that really lives up to its name. It is a coat that protects all your other clothes from wind and dampness.

But this Protect-all is no ordinary coat. Let's look at the way it is made.

The Protect-all looks something like an army parka--in a streamlined, feminine version. To put it on, you slip it over your head, then tie the belt in the back to fit your waistline. The cuffs and the collar are cut so they open up for you to slip on the Protect-all. But as soon as you pull the coat down, both the cuffs and the collar fall into place and fit quite smugly. The cuffs will roll up easily, too.

There's a hood on the Protect-all--cut in one with the coat. You can wear it loosely--or tie it up tightly around your chin on cold days.

Since you slip the Protect-all on over your head, it needs no opening in it at all, lengthwise. So even on blustery days the coat can't blow open. Then it has roomy pleats, roomy pockets, and a square inset under each arm--so you can slip the coat on over another coat if the weather is very cold--and so you have plenty of room for action.

The Protect-all is made of shower-proof cotton. And if you want to, you can complete the outfit with leggin's and mittens that go along with the design.

The nurse's uniform is comfortable, has plenty of room for action, and a look of dignity that most nurses insist upon in their uniforms.

High points of the design of the nurse's uniform are the collapsible pockets and the sleeves. The sleeves - like those of the Protect-all - are made something

like those of an army cook. They open up easily for getting the arm into, then they fall into place, with a snap fastener to make sure they fit snugly. The pockets are the collapsible kind that lie flat when they are empty, yet can expand to hold a number of articles. They also lie flat for ironing.

The nurse's uniform has a full-length front opening closed with ring style snaps, that you can simply hammer into the material. And the neck is an open, v-style with collar and lapels that lie flat. The belt is adjustable, fastens in front with a sliding buckle.

Other designs released recently include a food preparation dress--a laboratory dress for women scientists--and a cover-all apron for home-makers. The specialists have designed them with the needs of these particular women in mind. All are attractive and comfortable.

You might like to know the names of the clothing specialists who designed these work clothes. They are Clarice Scott and Margaret Smith. The secret of the success of the garments they have designed is the logical way in which they work.

First they study a particular job, note how much reaching, stooping, kneeling it calls for. They decide if certain safety features should be built into the garment. Then they make the garment to suit the job, being sure that the dress or coat or suit is practical. That is, they see to it that each garment can be cut out of material of regulation width economically. They see to it that each garment can be laundered easily--and that it is attractive "on."

That's all the news about work clothes I have for the present. But let me make one more suggestion. "If you are looking for some smart attractive clothing in which to do your war work, watch for these new designs from the Bureau of Home Economics of the U. S. Department of Agriculture. Look in your mail order catalogue, your pattern books, and your stores."